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**NEW JERSEY GRADUATION RATES AMONGST  
MINORITIES IN DIFFERENT COUNTIES**

by

Fatih Kilic

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Psychology  
College of Science and Mathematics  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in School Psychology  
at  
Rowan University  
April 27, 2016

Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.



## **Abstract**

Fatih Kilic

### **NEW JERSEY GRADUATION RATES AMONGST MINORITIES IN DIFFERENT COUNTIES**

2016-2017

Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study is to see if a county with a higher average household income will have higher graduation rates than counties with lower average household incomes, and to see if students who were White would graduate at a higher rate than students who are Black or Hispanic. The study found that average household income is not correlated to higher graduation percentages. Furthermore, the study found that White students graduate at a higher rate than students who were Black or Hispanic. Implications of this study show that there needs to be more focus on minority individuals in high school, and that more knowledge needs to be shared on graduation requirements.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

One of the founding principles of America was the acceptance and toleration of people from any country of origin; a land where a person from Jamaica could have a Turkish neighbor and they could both embrace their respected culture without prejudice. As time progressed, people from similar backgrounds flocked together in various cities and we had areas like “Little Italy” and “Chinatown”. Nobody was told that they could not live in a certain state or county. However, there was always a notion where certain towns had better schools than others, or that certain schools had more funding than other schools. As more and more people come from overseas, they will want to go to an area where their children have a higher chance of getting a good education. A good education ultimately leads to a higher chance that their children will graduate and be motivated to continue their education into college.

One of the uppermost factors in a family’s choice to come to America is living out the American dream. An article published by Don Baer (2015) states that the American dream varies from family to family, but is generally defined as being successful and happy. A study in 2005 saw that the obstacles to obtaining the American Dream are more severe today than ever. In order for someone to be successful, the person needs proper education. New Jersey is one of the top states when it comes to public education. Bernardo (2016) found that New Jersey ranks in at number three on the states with the best education. Ranking this high impacts a family’s choice of which state to live in, so their children could get a better education.



Kan and Cheng (2014) found that Education is vital for a person to find a job that not only gives an individual capital, but also makes the individual happy to wake up every day and go to that job. In 2013, the percentage of workers satisfied with their jobs was 47.7, well below the historical level of 61.1 percent in 1987. Working at a job that makes you fulfilled, and satisfied generally requires at least a high school diploma. This study will see if there is a difference in graduation rates amongst the 12 counties in New Jersey.

New Jersey has a population of 8.93 million people spread across 12 counties. This study will also look into average income per family in all of New Jersey's counties and will look at the highest populated school in each county. Furthermore, this study will compare the graduation rates between White students, Black students, and Hispanic students in each of these counties. Furthermore, it will find out which schools have higher and lower graduation rate of different minorities. The study will see if school in higher income areas will have a higher graduation rate amongst students, and see if there is a correlation between average household income and amount of students graduating high school. I hypothesize that schools located in higher income counties will have a higher graduation rate amongst students. I also hypothesize that White students will graduate at a higher percentage than Black students, and Hispanic students.

County income will be defined as average household income per family in each state. This information will be obtained from the United States Census Bureau.

Graduation rate will be defined as the percent of students who get their high school diploma. Graduation rates will be obtained from the school report card from the most populated school in the county. This study will measure graduation rates amongst people

who are white, African American, Hispanic, and Asian. Each of the minority's graduation percentage will be shown, and compared across all counties.

Limitations of this study will include, but not be limited to, students who get their high school degree online, individuals who go back and get their General Education Development degree (GED), and students who have to drop out to support their families or move to a different part of America or the world. As part of the technology age, more and more students are getting their degree online (high school, college, graduates). Also, as the crime rates increase in school, some parents are deciding to home school their children. Life events may force students to drop out of school and go back later to night school, or get their GED. Finally, some students may complete the majority of their education in New Jersey, but may move to another state before graduating high school.

This study will assume that schools are keeping accurate data on how many students they have of each minority. Also, that those schools will accurately show the graduation rates amongst all students in the school. This study will assume that the various counties in New Jersey will give accurate information about population, and average household income. These assumptions will be vital for my thesis in regards to generating accurate data on graduation rates and money that the school receives from taxes.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

All parents want their children to get their high school diploma. That is the reason parents send their kids to school. It seems that graduating high school is a much easier task today than before. Card (1999) found that high school achievement represents a major developmental indicator toward a productive adulthood. Most of the New Jersey high school students who took the state's new alternative graduation exam late last year failed at least one section, state officials said, putting them in jeopardy of not earning a diploma” (Gewertz). Schools in New Jersey are finding alternative means to make sure their students graduate high schools. Even though students have failed parts of their alternative graduation exam, they still get their diplomas. “New Jersey has in past years given some 15% of all diplomas to students who fail their exit exams but do some remedial work they're not tested on.” (n.d).

America is a nation known for their acceptance of people regardless of their background. Therefore, schools are filled with students of all different ethnicities. There are studies that found that income correlates to graduation rates. Research by Borg, Plumlee, and Stranahan (2007) found “One Florida school district African American and Hispanic students coming from poorer, less educated, or higher mobility households are less likely to meet graduation requirements than their higher socioeconomic, White, suburban counterparts”. Other studies have also found that graduation rates are higher for students who are white. “Only 52 percent of Hispanic and 56 per cent of African-American students graduate from high school four years after they enter 9th grade, compared with 78 percent of white students” (Barber). Additionally, research by Cooney

and McKillip (2013) found “literature on college access and success points to an achievement gap such that black, Latino, and Native American students are less likely to enroll in college and graduate as compared to white and Asian American students.

Even with the lower graduation percentages there are more and more minorities enrolling in high schools throughout the nation. However, the additional enrolment of minorities does not mean that their graduate rates will also be increased. Research performed by the Public Schools of North Carolina (2006) found” The increased enrollment of minority students in America's public schools is paralleled by a growing number of dropouts”. Moreover, current research by Lan and Lanthier (2003) reveals that the transition between middle school and high school is a pivotal juncture for potential dropouts and deserves additional research to elucidate its complexities. When there is more knowledge about the transition from middle to high school is obtained, the chances of students dropping out once they get to high school is decreased. Research by Kennelly and Monrad (2007) shows that schools with fully operational transition programs have an average dropout rate of only 8%, while schools without these programs have a dropout rate of 24%.

One reason for this may be that graduation requirements may not be understood by families of different ethnic backgrounds. Research by Davison *Aviles* et al. (1999) states graduation requirements may be glossed over as Latino students, often English language learners (ELLs), are herded into lower level academic tracks. Research by Orellana (2001) furthers the point that Latino students may not understand graduation requirements by stating “Minimum attendance requirements are not fully explained to Latino students, and family expectations prevent some students from meeting attendance

requirements”. Even with the misunderstanding graduate requirements, research by Caroyn and Harry (2006) found the percentage of Hispanics (aged 20 to 22) who have a high school diploma (excluding GEDs) increased from 62% in 1984 to 76% in 2002.

A statement from president Obama (2012) stated “Significantly improving the educational outcomes of African-Americans will provide substantial benefits for our country by, among other things, increasing college completion rates, productivity, employment rates, and the number of African-American teachers. Enhanced educational outcomes lead to more productive careers, improved economic opportunity, and greater social well-being for all Americans “. Although president Obama was issuing a statement on African-American students, the same statement can focus on all students. Schools need to spend more time making sure students understand the importance of education, and that high school isn’t somewhere to just go during the day in your teens, but a place that will help shape the person you will become as an adult. The trend is showing that Black students are graduating at a higher rate, and Black students are enrolling in higher education at a higher rate than White students. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) stated “in 2014, black high school graduates were more likely to enroll in college than their white peers by 71% to 67%”. In fact a report by Hussar and Bailey (2013) found that by the year 2022, blacks are projected to have a 26% increase in enrollment in higher education.

Another obstacle for Black and Hispanic students is the availability and preparation for advanced placement courses. Advanced placement courses allow high school students to take college classes, and get college credits during high school. A report by Cokley et al (2016) found that these courses are less likely to be offered in

schools with large numbers of Black and Hispanic students. Even when advanced placement courses are offered, Black and Hispanic students are disproportionately less likely to enroll in them and less likely to receive a qualifying score on the advanced placement exam compared to white and Asian students. A report by The College Board (2013) found that only 30% of black students with strong math skills took advanced placement math, compared to 60% of Asian students.

African-American students tend to do well in college. Page (2007) found that African immigrants having the highest academic achievement in terms of achieving a college degree of all racial and ethnic groups. The more educated people are about requirements to graduate high school and college the better their chances are that they will do well. Riggs (2014) found that there are several reasons why minority students are academically unprepared, including lack of access to rigorous college-prep tracks and getting academically behind early on. This is compounded by the fact that many colleges do not have resources dedicated to helping first-generation or low-income college students. To combat this, colleges need to focus on dedicating resources to help first-generation or low-income college students.

Research by Wallace et al (2008) found that it is well-established that Black students are more likely to be suspended than White students. Brooks et al (2000) went on and found that school suspensions are consistently associated with negative academic outcomes for individual students, including greater risk of dropping out of school. Furthermore, Wallace et al (2008) also found that a study of 19 middle schools in the Midwest, found that Black males were sent to the principal office more than their counterparts for more subjective reasons such as “disrespect” and “perceived threat”.

This trend of Black students being suspended more than White students would further suggest that Black students are not as trusting of the school system, which could be a reason their graduation percentages may be lower than White students.

Research by Kurtzleben (2014) shows that “By the 2022-23 school years, the number of high school graduates in 16 states and the District of Columbia will be at least 5 percent lower than it was in 2009-10”. An article by USA Today (2010) shows that “New Jersey has in past years given some 15% of all diplomas to students who fail their exit exams but do some remedial work they're not tested on”. However, a contrary article from Gewertz (2009) shows that “The New Jersey board of education has given initial approval to more-prescriptive graduation requirements and a revised alternative exit exam in a bid to toughen its standards for a high school diploma.” These contrary research articles give more reason to look at the cause of why there is a difference in graduation rates.

Research by Mishel and Roy (2006) found that three-fourths of black students obtain regular diplomas and, of the 25% who do not graduate, fully half go on to obtain a GED that allows them to enroll in college, enlist in the military, or take advantage of other postsecondary training opportunities. Many people feel that schools give up on children who do poorly, instead of helping them. Lee and Burkam (2003) states the organizational structure of American high schools is unwelcoming and marginalizes students who are already at risk of dropping out of high school. This is alarming due to the more educated a person is the higher wages they will receive in their jobs.

Many minorities compare how well they do in high school to how they will do in college. Kao and Tienda (1998) found as Black and Latino adolescents' progress through

high school, they are assessing their likelihood of attending and excelling in college. For Black and Latino youth, the transition is dependent on varied internal factors and external contexts, including prior educational experiences, cultural and familial experiences, and perceptions of barriers to educational and vocational goals (Constantine et al., 1998; Gloria & Hird, 1999). There needs to be more focus on getting a good education for minority youth. Worthington and Juntunen (1997) found that Black and Latino high school students who do not view education as relevant to their future are more likely to become academically and socially disengaged from school .

A study by Russell and Scott (2000) found that the dropout problem is concentrated in about 20% of our high schools. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimates in November, 2001, that each year for the past decade over half a million students have left school before graduation (Seastrom, Hoffman, Chapman, & Stillwell, 2005). Many of these students drop out during the beginning of high school. This may be due to the difference in school atmosphere from middle school to high school. In regards to students who have dropped out and went back, Grannis (1994) found that the three most prominent factors associated with degree attainment for dropout adolescents were academic aspiration, organizational skill, and locus of control. These factors were frequently referenced and emerged as the target variables across various dropout prevention programs.

According to Mayer (2004) and Olatunji (2005) Gender is an obvious but important factor in assessing a student's self-perception about completing high school. The consequences of dropping out of, or failing to complete, high school, including adverse effects on academic achievement and on economic opportunities, are more severe



for female dropouts than for male dropouts. Female dropouts have been described as “relatively bigger losers” (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986, p. 370). Furthermore, females who dropout have a bigger risk for psychological dysfunctions compared to men who dropout. Kaplan and Damphousse (1996) found female dropouts are more likely than male dropouts to be at risk for adult psychological dysfunction for a number of other reasons.

## **Chapter 3**

### **County Information**

#### **Atlantic County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Atlantic County has a population of 274,549. The percent of White individuals are 71.3%. The percent of African American individuals are 17.3%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 18.5%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 84.4%. The median household income is \$54,235. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Atlantic County had 1,536 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

#### **Bergen County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Bergen County has a population of 905,116. The percent of White individuals are 74.4%. The percent of African American individuals are 6.8%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 18.5%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 91.3%. The median household income is \$83,794. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Bergen County had 1,769 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

#### **Burlington County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Burlington County has a population of 448,734. The percent of White individuals are 74.4%. The percent of African American individuals are 17.5%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 7.5%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is

91.9%. The median household income is \$83,794. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Burlington County had 2,219 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Camden County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Camden County has a population of 513,657. The percent of White individuals are 70.1%. The percent of African American individuals are 21.1 %. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 15.6%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 87.1%. The median household income is \$61,683. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Bergen County had 1,769 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Cape May County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Cape May County has a population of 97,265. The percent of White individuals are 91.6%. The percent of African American individuals are **5.0%**. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 7.3%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 89.1%. The median household income is \$56,494. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Cape May County had 1,218 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Cumberland County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Cumberland County has a population of 156,898. The percent of White individuals are 72.1%. The percent of African American individuals are 21.9%. The percent of Hispanic individuals

are 29.3%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 77.0%. The median household income is \$50,750. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Cumberland County had 2,529 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Essex County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Essex Bergen County has a population of 783,987. The percent of White individuals are 49.7%. The percent of African American individuals are 41.9%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 22.1%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 83.5%. The median household income is \$55,095. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Essex County had 2,118 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Gloucester County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Gloucester County has a population of 288,288. The percent of White individuals are 83.9%. The percent of African American individuals are 10.8%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 5.7%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 90.9%. The median household income is \$74,524. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Gloucester County had 2,431 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Hudson County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Hudson County has a population of 634,266. The percent of White individuals are 65.8%.

The percent of African American individuals are 15.1%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 43.1%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 81.9%. The median household income is \$58,442. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Hudson County had 2,572 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Hunterdon County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Mercer County has a population of 128,349. The percent of White individuals are 92.0%. The percent of African American individuals are 2.7%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 6.2%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 94.2%. The median household income is \$106,143. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Mercer County had 1,811 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Mercer County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Mercer Bergen County has a population of 366,513. The percent of White individuals are 65.5%. The percent of African American individuals are 21.2%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 16.6%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 87.3%. The median household income is \$73,480. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Mercer County had 2,922 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

**Middlesex County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Bergen County has a population of 809,860. The percent of White individuals are 62.1%. The percent of African American individuals are 11.2%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 19.9%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 88.8%. The median household income is \$79,596. . According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Middlesex County had 1,769 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

**Monmouth County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Bergen County has a population of 630,380. The percent of White individuals are 84.7%. The percent of African American individuals are 7.7%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 10.5%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 92.2%. The median household income is \$84,526. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Monmouth County had 2,248 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

**Morris County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Morris County has a population of 492,276. The percent of White individuals are 84.2%. The percent of African American individuals are 3.6%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 12.8%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 93.5%. The median household income is \$98,633. According to the New Jersey Department of

Education, the most populated high school in Morris County had 1,562 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Ocean County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Ocean County has a population of 576,567. The percent of White individuals are 92.9%. The percent of African American individuals are 3.5%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 8.9%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 89.8%. The median household income is \$61,136. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Ocean County had 2,296 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Passaic County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Passaic County has a population of 501,226. The percent of White individuals are 75.4%. The percent of African American individuals are 14.8%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 39.6%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 81.9%. The median household income is \$57,654. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Passaic County had 3,150 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Salem County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Salem County has a population of 66,083. The percent of White individuals are 81.6%. The percent of African American individuals are 14.7%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 8.0%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 86.0%. The

median household income is \$59,718. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Salem County had 688 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Somerset County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Somerset County has a population of 323,444. The percent of White individuals are 71.2%. The percent of African American individuals are 9.9%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 14.2%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 93.2%. The median household income is \$99,020. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Somerset County had 2,803 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Sussex County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Sussex County has a population of 149,265. The percent of White individuals are 94.2%. The percent of African American individuals are 2.2%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 7.3%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 93.4%. The median household income is \$87,335. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Sussex County had 1,209 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Union County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Union County has a population of 536,499. The percent of White individuals are 68.4%. The percent of African American individuals are 23.5%. The percent of Hispanic individuals



are 30.0%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 85.3%. The median household income is \$68,507. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Union County had 2,346 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Warren County**

According to information obtained from The United States Census Bureau Warren County has a population of 108,692. The percent of White individuals are 90.9%. The percent of African American individuals are 4.5%. The percent of Hispanic individuals are 8.4%. The high school graduation percent of individuals 25 and older is 89.7%. The median household income is \$70,912. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the most populated high school in Warren County had 1,628 students during the 2013-2014 school year.

**Materials.** Data was publicly available on the internet. To find the most populated school in each county, I used the website <http://high-schools.com/>. The New Jersey Department of Education's website (<https://education.state.nj.us/pr/>) was used to get the school report card for each school. The school report card listed all the graduation rates for White students, Black students, and Hispanic students. All data was from the 2013-2014 academic school year.

To find the average household income, The United States Census Bureau's website (<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts>) was utilized. The information was from 2014, the same year that my information on graduation rates was from as well.

**Methods.** Data was inputted into SPSS, the data included county list, total graduation percentage, White student graduation percentage, Black student graduation percentage, Hispanic student graduation percentage, and average household income amongst the twenty one counties in New Jersey.

The independent variable was the county that was being looked into. The dependent variables included total school population, White student graduation rates, Black student graduation rates, Hispanic student graduation rates, and average household income. The analysis that was used was descriptive and correlation.

## Chapter 4

### Results

The first hypothesis states that a county with a higher average household income will have students graduate at a higher percentage than counties with lower average household income. That hypothesis is not supported. A correlation analysis indicated a non significant relationship.

In regards to my second hypothesis, which White students would graduate at a higher percent than Black students, and Hispanic students, that hypothesis was supported. Using SPSS I analyzed the data and found that White students graduation at 93.3%, Black students graduation at 84.83, and Hispanic students graduation at 82.4%.

Table 1

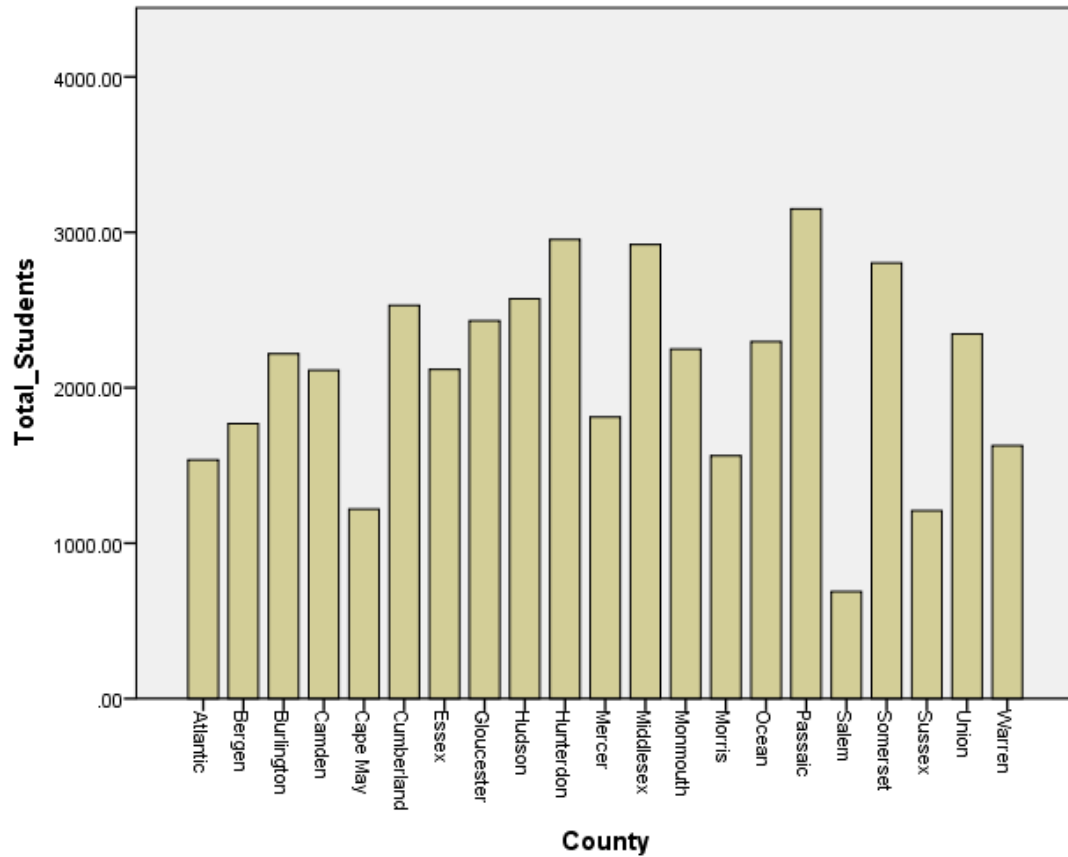
#### *SPSS Graduation Statistics*

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
White_Graduation_Percent	20	84.00	98.00	93.3000	3.93500
Black_Graduation_Percent	12	66.00	100.00	84.8333	9.62793
Hispanic_Graduation_Percent	15	72.00	94.00	82.4000	8.14862
Valid N (listwise)	8				

## Total Number of Students

Table 2

*Total Number of Students*



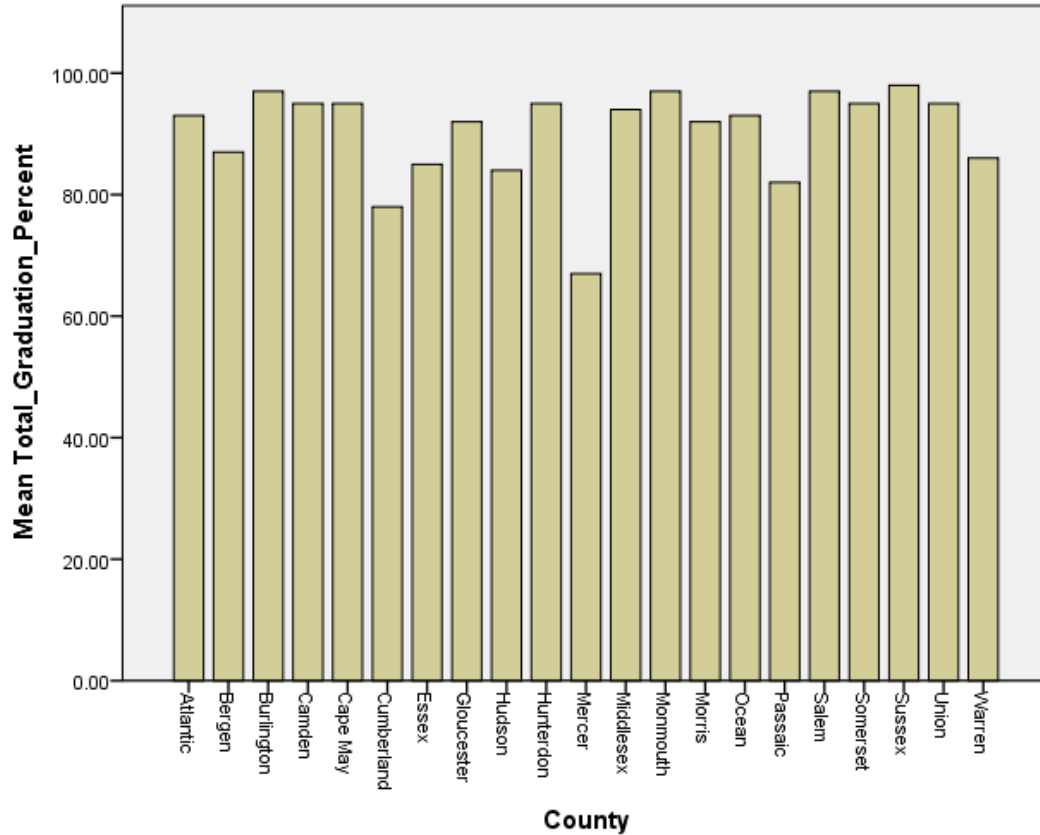
Based on the data provided by the school report cards in each of the most populated schools in the twenty one New Jersey Counties, in regards to total number of students in a school, the highest populated school in Passaic County has 3,150 students. The highest populated school in Somerset County has 2,803 students. The highest populated school in Hunterdon County has 2,954 students. The highest populated school in Middlesex County has 2,922 students. The highest populated school in Hudson County has 2,572 students. The highest populated school in Cumberland County has 2,529

students. The highest populated school in Gloucester County has 2,431 students. The highest populated school in Union County has 2,346 students. The highest populated school in Ocean County has 2,296 students. The highest populated school in Monmouth County has 2,248 students. The highest populated school in Burlington County has 2,219 students. The highest populated school in Essex County has 2,118 students. The highest populated school in Camden County has 2,113 students. The highest populated school in Mercer County has 1,811 students. The highest populated school in Bergen County has 1,769 students. The highest populated school in Warren County has 1,628 students. The highest populated school in Atlantic County has 1,536 students. The highest populated school in Morris County has 1,562 students. The highest populated school in Cape May County has 1,218 students. The highest populated school in Sussex County has 1,209 students. The highest populated school in Salem County has 668 students.

## Total Graduation Rates

Table 3

*Total Graduation Rates*



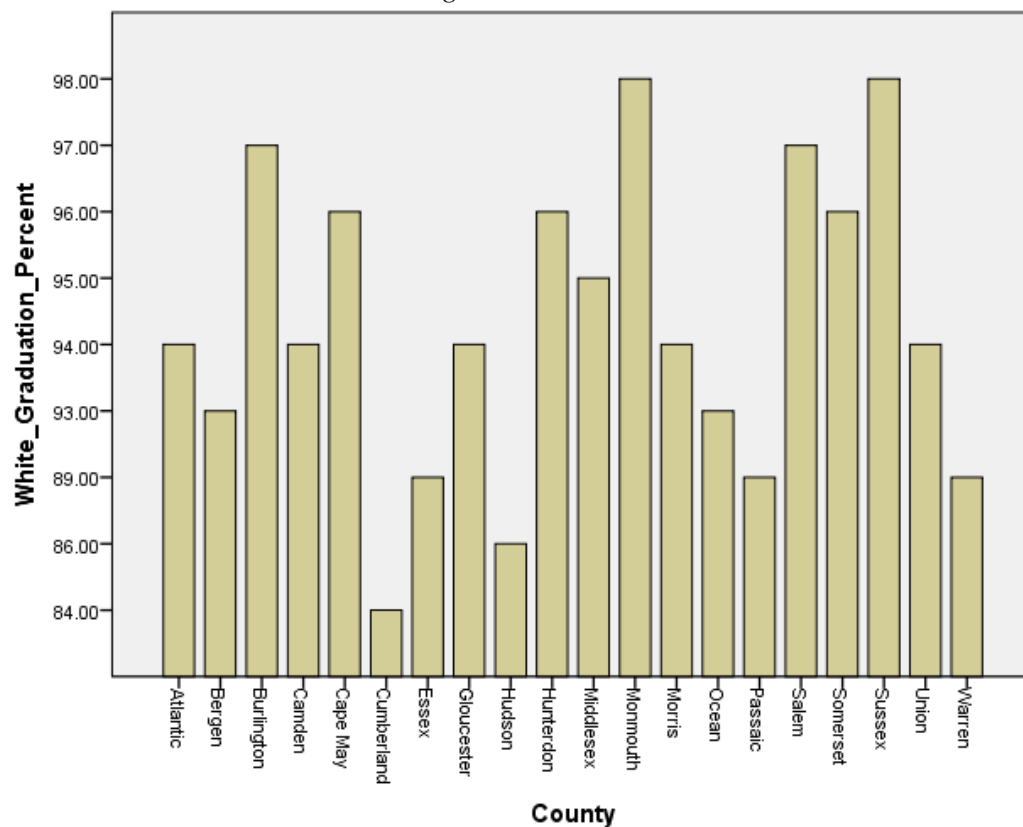
Based on the data provided by the school report cards in each of the most populated schools in the twenty one New Jersey Counties, we see that Sussex County has the highest graduation rate at 98%. Salem, Monmouth, and Burlington County have a graduation rate of 97%. Union, Somerset, Hunterdon, Cape May, and Camden County have a graduation rate of 95%. Middlesex has a graduation rate of 94%. Atlantic and Ocean County have a graduation rate of 93%. Gloucester and Morris County have a graduation rate of 92%. Bergen County has a graduation rate of 87%. Warren County has

a graduation rate of 86%. Essex County has a graduation rate of 85%. Hudson County has a graduation rate of 84%. Passaic County has a graduation rate of 82%. Cumberland County has a graduation rate of 78%. Mercer County has a graduation rate of 67%.

Table 4

### White Graduation Percentage

*White Student Graduation Percentage*



Based on the data provided by the school report cards in each of the most populated schools in the twenty one New Jersey Counties, in regards to white students Monmouth and Sussex County has a graduation rate of 98%. Burlington and Salem County has a graduation rate of 97%. Somerset, Cape May, and Hunterdon County have

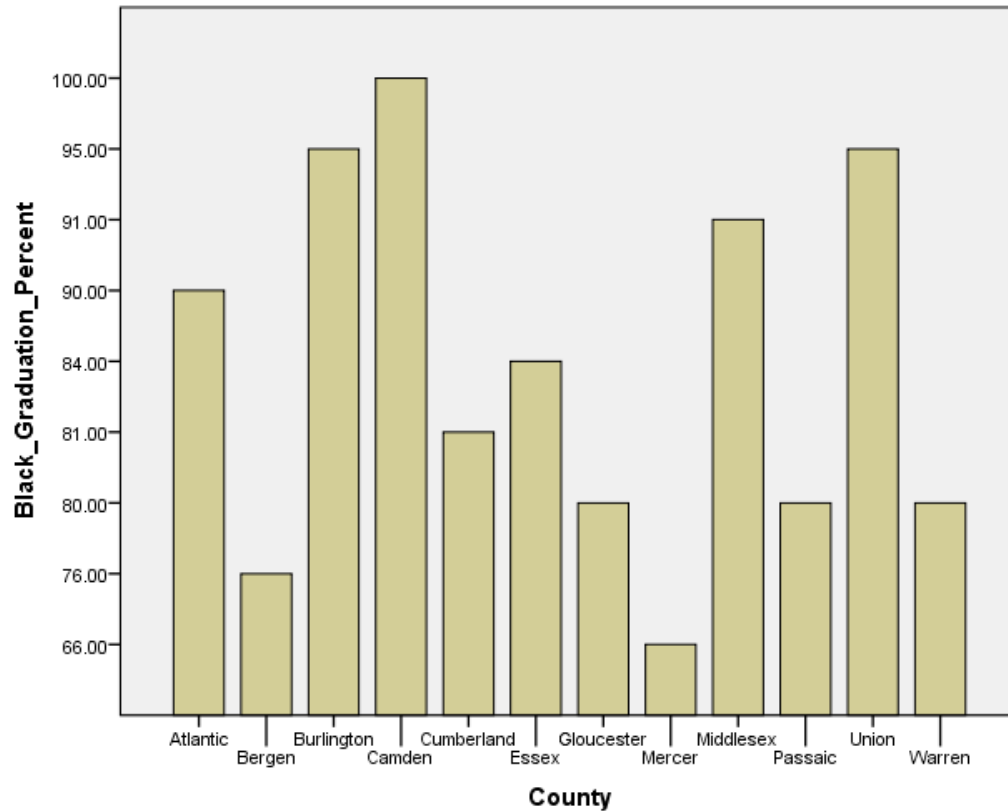
a graduation rate of 96%. Middlesex County has a graduation rate of 95%. Union, Morris, Gloucester, Camden, and Atlantic County have a graduation rate of 94%. Bergen and Ocean County has a graduation rate of 93%. Essex, Passaic, and Warren County have a graduation rate of 89%. Hudson County has a graduation rate of 86%. Cumberland County has a graduation rate of 84%. Mercer County did not provide a graduation percentage for White students in their most populated school.



## Black Graduation Percentage

Table 5

*Black Student Graduation Percentage*



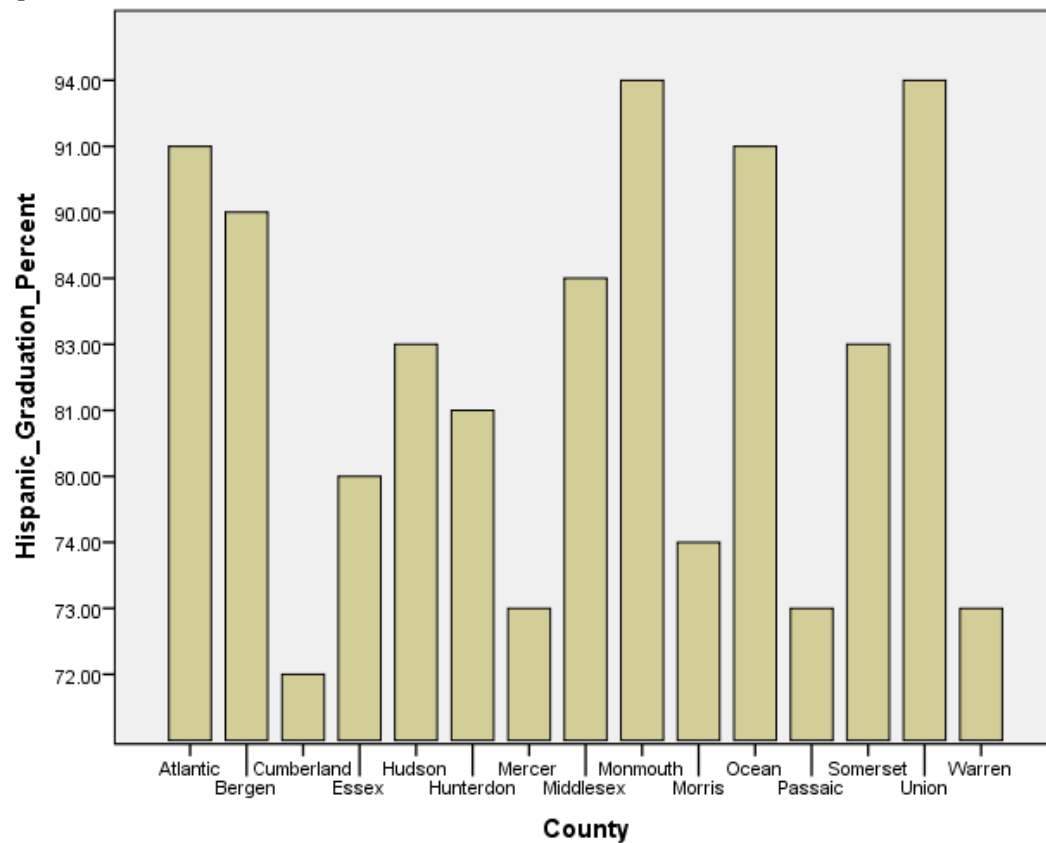
Based on the data provided by the school report cards in each of the most populated schools in the twenty one New Jersey Counties, in regards to Black students Camden County has a graduation rate of 100%. Union and Burlington County has a graduation rate of 95%. Middlesex County has a graduation rate of 91%. Atlantic County has a graduation rate of 90%. Essex County has a graduation rate of 84%. Cumberland County has a graduation rate of 81%. Gloucester, Passaic, and Warren County have a graduation rate of 80%. Bergen County has a graduation rate of 76%. Mercer County has

a graduation rate of 66%. Cape May, Hudson, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Salem, Somerset, and Sussex County did not provide a graduation percentage for Black students in their most populated school.

### Hispanic Graduation Percentage

Table 6

#### *Hispanic Students Graduation Rates*



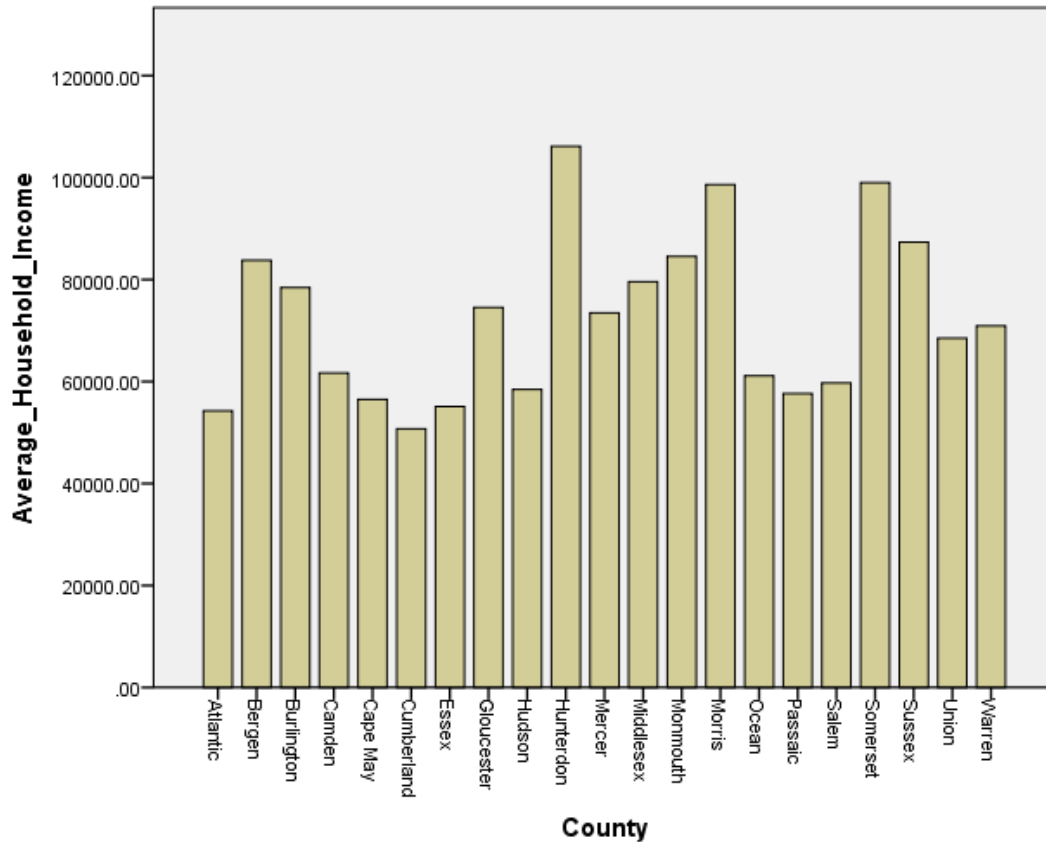
Based on the data provided by the school report cards in each of the most populated schools in the twenty one New Jersey Counties, in regards to Hispanic students Union and Monmouth County has a graduation rate of 94%. Atlantic and Ocean County

has a graduation rate of 91%. Bergen County has a graduation rate of 90%. Middlesex County has a graduation rate of 84%. Hudson and Somerset County has a graduation rate of 83%. Hunterdon County has a graduation rate of 81%. Essex County has a graduation rate of 80%. Morris County has a graduation rate of 74%. Mercer, Passaic, and Warren County has a graduation rate of 73%. Cumberland County has a graduation rate of 72%. Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Gloucester, Salem, and Sussex County did not provide a graduation percentage for Hispanic students in their most populated school.

### Average Household Income

Table 7

*Average Household Income by County*



Based on the data provided by The United States Census, the average household income in each of the twenty one New Jersey Counties is as follows, from greatest to least. Hunterdon County has an average household income of \$106,143. Somerset County has an average household income of \$99,020. Morris County has an average household income of \$98,633. Sussex County has an average household income of \$87,335. Monmouth County has an average household income of \$84,526. Bergen County has an average household income of \$83,794. Middlesex County has an average household income of \$79,596. Burlington County has an average household income of \$78,446. Gloucester County has an average household income of \$74,524. Mercer County has an average household income of \$73,480. Warren County has an average household income of \$70,912. Union County has an average household income of \$68,507. Camden County has an average household income of \$61,683. Ocean County has an average household income of \$61,136. Salem County has an average household income of \$59,718. Hudson County has an average household income of \$58,442. Passaic County has an average household income of \$57,654. Cape May County has an average household income of \$56,494. Essex County has an average household income of \$55,095. Atlantic County has an average household income of \$54,235. Cumberland County has an average household income of \$50,750.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

Although the first hypothesis that a county with a higher average household income will have students graduate a higher percentage than counties with lower average household income proved to be non significant, there were still trends that showed money has a factor in graduation rates. The highest average income county is Hunterdon County with \$106,143. The total graduation percentage was 95% in that county. The lowest average income county is Cumberland County with \$50,095. The total graduation percentage was 78% in that county. The median county average household income was Warren County with \$70,912. The total graduation percentage was 86% in that county. Those numbers coincide with my hypothesis, but there were certain counties that were outliers. The data shows a trend that higher the average household income will have higher graduation rates in the respected county.

Since data was only from the most populated school in the county, that school may not have been a proper representation of the county as a whole. Also, some schools failed to report graduation rates of certain minorities within that county. For example, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Gloucester, Salem, and Sussex County did not report graduation rates for Hispanic students. Further research may want to look at graduation rates in the county, rather than graduation rates just from the most populated school in the county.

In regards to the second hypothesis, which White students would graduate at a higher percent than Black students, and Hispanic students, that hypothesis was supported. Not only was the second hypothesis supported, the descriptive statistics

showed that there was a huge difference in the standard deviation within the three groups that were looked at. White students graduated at 93.3% with a 3.93 standard deviation, Black students graduated at 84.83 with a 9.62 standard deviation, and Hispanic students graduated at 82.4% with an 8.14 standard deviation. The higher a standard deviation the larger the gap in graduation percentages.

In regards to normal distribution 68% of the distribution lies within one standard deviation of the mean. 95% of the distribution lies within two standard deviations of the mean. This means that 68% of White students graduate between 89.37% and 97.23%, and 95% of White student's graduation between 85.46% and 100%. 68% of Black students graduate between 75.21% and 94.45%, and 95% of Black students graduate between 65.59% and 100%. 68% of Hispanic students graduate between 74.26 and 90.54, and 95% of Hispanic students graduate between 66.12% and 98.68%. Looking at those numbers we see that even the lower portion of the 95% of White students still graduate at a higher rate than the average percent of Black students, and Hispanic students.

Although there are trends that Black students and Hispanic students are graduating at a higher rate, it is not high enough. Looking at the country as a whole, Hispanic students generally graduate at a higher rate than Black students. Adams (2013) found between 2006 and 2010, the Hispanic graduation rate grew from 61 percent to 71.4 percent, while the rate for black students rose from 59.2 percent to 66.1 percent.

Although the trend is that graduation rates are climbing higher, they still only include about two thirds of minority students graduating. There is hope for America as a whole, as a report by Adams and Sparks (2013) found the "averaged freshman graduation rate" rose to 78.2 percent of public school students receiving a diploma in 2010, up from 75.5

percent the year before. In 2006, the rate was 73.4 percent, and in 2001, it was 71.7 percent.

As for the strengths of this study, all school data was accurate from school report cards that every school is obligated to submit to the state every school year. All information on household income was taken from the census which is done every four years, which each county has to submit to the state. The average household income was from the same year in which was looked at in the school report cards. All data was public data, available for anyone to view at any time.

Although all schools have to submit school report cards to the state, some schools left out graduation rates for certain ethnicities. Additionally, only the most populated school in the district was looked at in regards to graduation rates. Further studies may look into average graduation rates in the county, rather than average graduation rates in the most populated school in the county. Finally, this process could be used to look at America as a whole and compare which states have a higher graduation rate amongst different minorities instead of looking at counties in a state.

Furthermore, information was not obtained by individuals who go back to get their general educational development (GED) degree. Students that are homeschooled were also not accounted for, and students getting their degree from an accredited online school were not looked into.

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